

CHAPTER II

IRAN AND MESOPOTAMIA

In 539 B.C. Cyrus peacefully took possession of Babylon, and the kingdom of Iranian peoples, taken over by the Achaemenian dynasty from the Medes, expanded to become the first real world-empire of ancient history. It is true that the overthrow of Croesus and his Lydian kingdom, sealed by the conquest of Sardis in 546 B.C., had already made the region of Asia Minor subject to the Persians; but it was the thrust down into the southerly regions of the Tigris and Euphrates which gave Cyrus and the Iranian state supranational significance through control of most of the known world. This region was the ancient centre of cuneiform culture which since the third millennium had permeated the whole of the Near East from eastern Anatolia and the Syrian-Palestinian coast to the high valleys of the Zagros mountains and the low-lying plains of Susa. It was here that people from the eastern mountains – Hurrians and Kassites – had already married into the Mesopotamian city and temple culture, setting upon it the stamp of their national idiosyncrasies. This area had from time to time been the arena of political confrontations, in which now Babylonians, now Assyrians had fought for hegemony over the neighbouring peoples. Now Cyrus was pressing into Babylon, as all after him would do whose ambition was to be sole rulers over the east, such as Alexander and the Seleucids, whose historical importance ebbed out only with their loss of Babylon and Assyria to the Arsacids. For the Sasanians, too, the lowlands of Iraq constituted the heart of their dominions, and when this heart finally fell a prey to the onslaught of Muslim armies, their rule over the east likewise was broken.

Thus Iraq, in spite of seeming to lie so far west of the region of Iranian settlement, belongs rather to *Irān* itself than to "Anīrān", as Sasanian documents describe non-Iranian areas of the empire. The name *al-Irāq*, for all its Arabic appearance, is derived from Middle Persian *erāgh* "lowlands". From the time of the Medes the political centre of gravity of Iran had lain in the west; it was here that all important cultural development had taken place, whereas in the east the art of writing was unknown, with the seeming outstanding exception of the Avesta; but even this exception occurred only after Maz-

daism had reached the civilized west, where its canonical compositions were noted down much later.

Of the four residences of the Achaemenians named by Herodotus – Ecbatana, Pasargadae or Persepolis, Susa and Babylon – the last was maintained as their most important capital, the fixed winter quarters, the central office of bureaucracy, exchanged only in the heat of summer for some cool spot in the highlands. Under the Seleucids and the Parthians the site of the Mesopotamian capital moved a little to the north on the Tigris – to Seleucia and Ctesiphon. It is indeed symbolic that these new foundations were built from the bricks of ancient Babylon, just as later Baghdad, a little further upstream, was built out of the ruins of the Sasanian double city of al-Madā'in.

When Alexander the Great at last halted his victorious march, which led him as far as the Indus, the eastern frontier of the Achaemenian kingdom, and set his face once again towards the west, he saw as the final goal of his desires the rebuilding of Babylon, whose monuments and mighty temples (É-sagila) he wanted to bring to life again; west and east were to merge into a vast empire, and Babylon would be the capital of the world. The “wedding of the ten thousand” was a symbolic act directed towards this end. Alexander’s early death (323 B.C.) brought all these designs to nothing. When Seleucus I Nicator (321–281) set himself up as ruler of the east, first to fall within his dominion were the satrapies of Babylon and, in 317 B.C., the Susan satrapies of Elam and Khūzistān as well. After the reconquest of Iran, in 306 B.C. he proclaimed himself *βασιλεύς*, and after his victory at Ipsos in Phrygia (301 B.C.) he added the provinces of Syria, Armenia and Mesopotamia, as well as parts of Cappadocia and Cilicia. Next to Alexander, Seleucus was the most important founder of cities; we know of no less than nine places that bear his name, the most distinguished of which is Seleucia on the right bank of the Tigris, north of Babylon and south of Baghdad. This new Babylonian capital quickly developed to become the most important trading emporium of the Hellenized Achaemenian empire. Although frequently destroyed in later times, especially under the Parthians as a result of wars with the Romans, it yet maintained its importance until supplanted under the ‘Abbasids (from A.D. 750) by Baghdad.

Babylon continued to be the centre of this Asiatic empire under the Macedonian successors of Seleucus, the most important among whom

were Antiochus I Soter (281–63), who kept the empire going after his father's murder, and Antiochus III (The Great) Kallinikos (222–187). Not until the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (176–63), were the Seleucids to forfeit the main territory of Babylon. Antiochus died after a forlorn battle against the Parthians in the Persian Tabai. The residue of the Seleucid empire, limited to Syria, was made a Roman province by Pompey.

It was the Parthian Mithradates I (174–36), the sixth to bear the name Arsaces, who finally succeeded in incorporating east and north-west Iran into his empire, and with consolidated strength pressed into the land of the two rivers. From 144 B.C. Babylon became Parthian.

In the beginning the Arsacids ruled over the eastern Caspian region with Hyrcania at its centre and having Nisā and Hecatompyle as capitals. Soon, however, Ctesiphon on the Tigris opposite the Greek Seleucia became the capital of this new Iranian state. By the middle of the 2nd century B.C. the centre of gravity of the Parthian empire had shifted to Mesopotamia, and, apart from occasional encroachment on one side or the other, the Euphrates formed Iran's true western frontier, until the end of the Sasanian period in the 7th century. Just as the traditional residences of the Achaemenians in the highlands (Pasargadae, Persepolis and the Median Ecbatana) were soon ousted by Susa and Babylon, so now the lowland Ctesiphon was to take over as metropolis from Hecatompyle and Nisā in the old Parthian country.

It is true that Ctesiphon was repeatedly conquered by the Romans; these, however, were merely brief episodes with no enduring consequences: they were Roman reprisals for Parthian predatory excursions. And while the Romans fought with the Parthians for centuries over Armenia, or were forced constantly to defend their frontier along the Syrian desert, in the end Iraq remained under Parthian rule. It must have been specially galling for the Romans to realize that it was impossible for them to protect their guard-posts by a territory reaching further into Mesopotamia. This fact they learned in 53 B.C. at Carrhae when, led by Crassus, the eagles of the legions – accustomed to victory – were captured by Orodes I. Carrhae is the ancient Harrān of upper Mesopotamia, a city celebrated as a shrine of moon-worship. The legionary eagles were finally returned by Phraates IV (37–2 B.C.) as the price of release from the intrigues of Roman-sponsored rivals to the throne.

Meanwhile a development of decisive political importance had been going on. Under the Assyrians the Arabs had already been making their influence felt. This development of Arab influence was in fact the start of that great migration of tribes, which continued the preceding Aramaean infiltration, and reached its climax in the expansion of Islam. From the south, desert people pressed into civilized Palestine and Syria and also along the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris. Whereas the ancient caravan city of Palmyra (Tadmor of the Bible) had been a bulwark for the Romans against invading Arab tribes and, even more, against pillaging Parthians, a similar fortress was built up in northern Iraq from the Arsacid side. This was the city of Hatra (al-Ḥadr) to the west of ancient Assur, a fortified commercial centre like the later Hira. The ruins of the desert city of Hatra are impressive. They display walls fortified by towers, and a great square in the centre where once stood the palace and the temple. There was no fire-cult there, as was originally believed. The temple was dedicated to local gods, especially to the sun-god Šamaš. But the masks which decorate the exterior walls of the temple are in an unmistakably Iranian idiom.¹ The emperor Trajan, who marched triumphantly into Babylonia and reached the Persian Gulf, tried on his return to take Hatra, but in vain. Similarly Septimius Severus, who at first was victorious against Vologeses IV, was unable to capture Hatra (A.D. 197), although the Romans had already made Mesopotamia into a province with capitals at Edessa and Nisibis.

Just as at an earlier date (530 B.C.) Cyrus the Achaemenian had defeated his Median overlord Astyages and finally taken possession of his capital of Ecbatana (Hamadān), so from Persis, the province of Fārs, came the Sasanian Ardashir and set himself upon the throne of Artabanus (Arda-vān V), the last of the Arsacids. The latter was defeated and killed in the plain of Hormizdagān in Khuzistān. By A.D. 226 Ctesiphon, the capital, was in Ardashir's power.

Thus dominion over Iran again fell to a Persian from the south-west, while the Medes and Arsacids joined in the government from the north-west. Even the novelish story of the usurpation of power by Ardashir and the overthrow of Arda-vān resembles in essential features the romantic tale of Cyrus and the dethronement of Astyages (530 B.C.).

¹ Ghirshman, *Iran*, p. 37; H. von Gall, "Zur figuralen Architekturplastik des grossen Tempels von Hatra", *Bagdader Mitteilungen* v (Berlin, 1970), 7-32.

In Persis we are on the ground of ancient Elam, more precisely on the mountains of Anshan itself and so nearer to the fertile and civilized region of Sumer and Babylon. With the capture of Ctesiphon (A.D. 226), Ardashir I (224-40) gained possession of Babylonia and along with it the claim to world-historic importance. Ardashir celebrated his victory over Ardashir in several rock-reliefs,¹ in which Iranian religion, too, found fresh expression.

No less lustrous a kingly personality do we see in Shāpūr I (241-71), of whom we possess not only many rock-reliefs, but the longest extant Sasanian inscription which, as foundation charter of several imperial fire temples, provides both an account of his campaigns in the west and also of the high officials who administered the empire – a kind of *notitia dignitatum*. The military section reaches its high point in the report of the battles at Edessa in upper Mesopotamia, in which the Roman emperor Valerian was taken prisoner (A.D. 260), an incident repeatedly recorded on Shāpūr's rock-reliefs.

Shāpūr II (310-79) built a moat in Iraq as protection against raids by desert Arabs; he also rebuilt the armoury at Anbār in central Iraq (near Hīra), naming it Pērōz-Shāpūr. At first Shāpūr II suffered defeats at Ctesiphon and elsewhere at the hands of the emperor Julian the Apostate, but in the end he was able to force the famished Roman army to retreat. The emperor Julian died of a wound received in battle, in Iraq in A.D. 363, and his successor Jovian was compelled to agree to the evacuation of important Roman strongholds in Mesopotamia such as Nisibis and Singara, and Rome had now to give up all ambitions in the direction of Armenia as well.

During the reign of Shāpūr II, a strong supporter of the Mazdayasnian religion, Christians were persecuted as enemies of the state. Since the time of Shāpūr III (383-8) there came to be a catholicos of Seleucia, but not until the reign of Yazdgard I (399-422) was Christian public worship permitted (A.D. 409).

Bahrām V (420-39), nicknamed Gōr,² overcame incipient rebellion with the aid of Arabian mounted tribes. He had been educated in Hīra in Babylonia by Arabs, and there are even Arabic poems attributed to him. In his day Persian Christians began to break their links with their Syrian brethren in the west, and, protected by the Persian crown, to

¹ W. Hinz, *Altiranische Funde und Forschungen* (Berlin, 1969), pp. 115ff, with excellent pictures.

² O. Hansen, "Tocharisch-iranische Beziehungen", *ZDMG* xciv (1940), 161ff.

form their own Iranian church. This separation was a political move of the Sasanians, designed to break the traditional tie between the Christian subjects of the Persian empire and Byzantium in the west.

Under Khusrāu I (531–79) the Sasanian empire reached its final zenith. In the war with the eastern Roman empire Antioch was conquered (A.D. 540) and its inhabitants were settled in a southern Babylonian city, which was named Veh-Antiyūk. Some of the Neo-Platonists, driven from Athens by Justinian after the closure of the Academy, seem to have carried on their work for a brief spell in the newly founded university of Gundēshāpūr in Khūzistān.

Khusrāu II Parvīz (590–628) succeeded in conquering almost the whole eastern Roman empire including Egypt. But as he was drawn up before Byzantium, the military genius, later to become the emperor Heraclius (610–41), attacked him in the rear, which extended far into Armenia and Mesopotamia. After the battle of Nineveh Khusrāu II marched back to his residence of Dastagird, north-east of Ba‘qūba; there he was murdered by his son Shērōy, who had the support of the generals. The short-lived Shērōy succeeded in making a peace of convenience with Heraclius, according to which the old frontiers of the two exhausted empires were re-established.

In 632, amid a general state of anarchy, the last of the Sasanian kings, Yazdgard III, mounted the throne. In the same year Muḥammad died, and the Arab commander-in-chief Khālid b. al-Walīd with his bedouin warriors had already occupied the marshes of south Babylonia. The Persians were defeated in three battles: first at Qādisiyya near Kūfa in A.D. 637, then in the same year near Jalūlā (modern Jalaula near Khānaqīn on the Iraq–Persian border) and finally in A.D. 642 at Nihāvand (in Media, south of Hamadān), so that the Muslims not only kept firm hold on the land of the two rivers, but were able to prepare for a further advance into the Iranian highlands. The conquest of Ctesiphon and Babylonia made the Arabs the masters of the Near East.

During the thousand years that had passed since the end of the Achaemenian empire, the face of civilized Mesopotamia had undergone considerable change. Compared with the ancient oriental period, the great prosperity, still extravagantly acclaimed by Herodotus, had undoubtedly declined. Babylonia was still a land of agriculture and of commerce; but famous cities such as Babylon or the Assyrian residences had visibly decayed; destroyed by wars, the temples, once

the centre and the adornment of a city, were no longer, or very seldom being rebuilt. Rivers had changed course and moved away from the townships and the canals had become silted up. This had led to the founding of new townships, which grew up often from military encampments. These flourished rapidly behind the stout walls which protected the inhabitants from increasing nomadic activity. In place of the Amorite and Aramaean attacks of old, they now faced an Arab threat from the desert. Let us give a brief sketch of a few of these new foundations.

There is, for example, Charax Spasinou on the Shatt al-'Arab, once thought to have been close to Khurramshahr; most probably, however, it was situated further north.¹ Charax was the capital of the region of Mesēnē and was known as Karēkā dē-Mēšān. The sonorous Greek equivalent was "the Palisaded Encampment of Spasines", and the surrounding district was called the Characene. It was here, in the ancient "land of the sea", that the local prince Hyspaosines, son of Sagdodonacus, and undoubtedly an Iranian, set up his chief residence in 129 B.C. The place had previously been named Antiocheia by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-64). Originally it had been called Alexandria, after a garrison placed by Alexander the Great at the mouth of the Pasisigris (the modern Kārūn). Hyspaosines' successors likewise all bore Persian names such as Tiraios and Artabazos, and a certain Obadas Frataphernes is mentioned as late as A.D. 166.²

The history of al-Hira is substantially more modern. It lay in the south near Kūfa between the Nahr Hindiyā and the Nahr Najaf. The place was settled by tribes from 'Umān and southern Arabia and formed the front line of Persian defence against the bedouin. This explains its originally Aramaic name Hērtā dē-Taiyāyē meaning "the tent encampment of Tai" – a tribal name denoting Arabs in general.³ It was composed of forts, including gardens and fields, encircled by walls and towers. In A.D. 195 the kingdom of Hira was founded by Nu'mān I, the "leader of the Persians", and it endured until almost the close of the Sasanian era, when Khusrau II (590-627) overthrew the Lakhmid dynasty and placed a Persian governor over the city of Hira. Hira was governed by Āzādbeh in A.D. 633, in which year it was conquered by Khālid b. al-Walīd. It was from Hira as a base that Abū Bakr and

¹ J. Hansman, "Charax and the Karkeh", *IA* vii (Miscellanea in honour of R. Ghirshman, 1970), 21-58; H. J. Nissen, "Südbabylonien in parthischer und sassanidischer Zeit", *ZDMG*, Suppl. 13 (1969), pp. 1036ff. ² See further pp. 310ff on Characene.

³ Syr. *Taiyāyē* "Arab"; Mid. Pers. *Tāzīk*; Pers. *Tāzī*.

‘Umar successfully attacked Mesopotamia, as a prelude to the overthrow of the Sasanian empire. The inhabitants of the city were cosmopolitan in outlook and composed of diverse elements: heathen Arab, deriving from the very earliest days of the city’s existence; Sasanian Persian, by virtue of its feudal relationship to the sovereign lords of Ctesiphon; and Byzantine Christian, by virtue of its being the see of a bishop and the springboard of the Nestorian missions to Arabia. A tomb inscription in al-Namāra indicates that Imra’ al-Qais, a Lakhmid prince, became a Christian; and Dair Hind near Ḥira was, as the name indicates, a monastery, endowed by a Lakhmid princess.¹ According to the documents, Mundhir III (503–54), being a heathen Arab, sacrificed the son of his adversary to Aphrodite, i.e. to al-‘Uzzā, the Arabian Venus. The city survived assault and conquest by the Kinda, and Mundhir III even killed the bedouin prince Ḥārith b. ‘Amr. In the 6th century Ḥira was twice conquered and laid waste by the factious Ghassānids, who fought on the side of the Romans; but each time it recovered. Not until Khusrāu II had besieged the city and deposed and executed Nu‘mān III did the city’s glory come to an end. Today the ruins of the palace of Khawarnaq (a Persian name) still bear witness to that glory.² Very quickly Ḥira was overshadowed and finally completely eclipsed by the Muslim cities of Kūfa and Baṣra.

The capital of Babylon and hence the metropolis of the whole empire was no longer sited, as Babylon had been, on the Euphrates; it had moved north to the left bank of the Tigris, opposite the Hellenistic Seleucia, and it now bore the Graecized form Ctesiphon³ of the Iranian “Tēspōn”.⁴ The precise meaning of the name – shared by a fortress near Marv – is unknown. Later Ctesiphon was to be renamed with one of the many *Veh* compounds: *Veh-Kavāt* meaning “good Kavāt/ Qubād”.⁵ The Arabs called the Sasanian capital al-Madā'in, the

¹ More exactly, Hind was the wife of the Lakhmid al Mundhir III and mother of the kings ‘Amr (c. 554–69) and Qābūs (569–73). The latter name is Iranian. Data according to K. Vollers, “Die Geschichte des Mutalammis”, *Beiträge zur Assyriologie* v (Leipzig, 1906), 149ff, esp. 152.

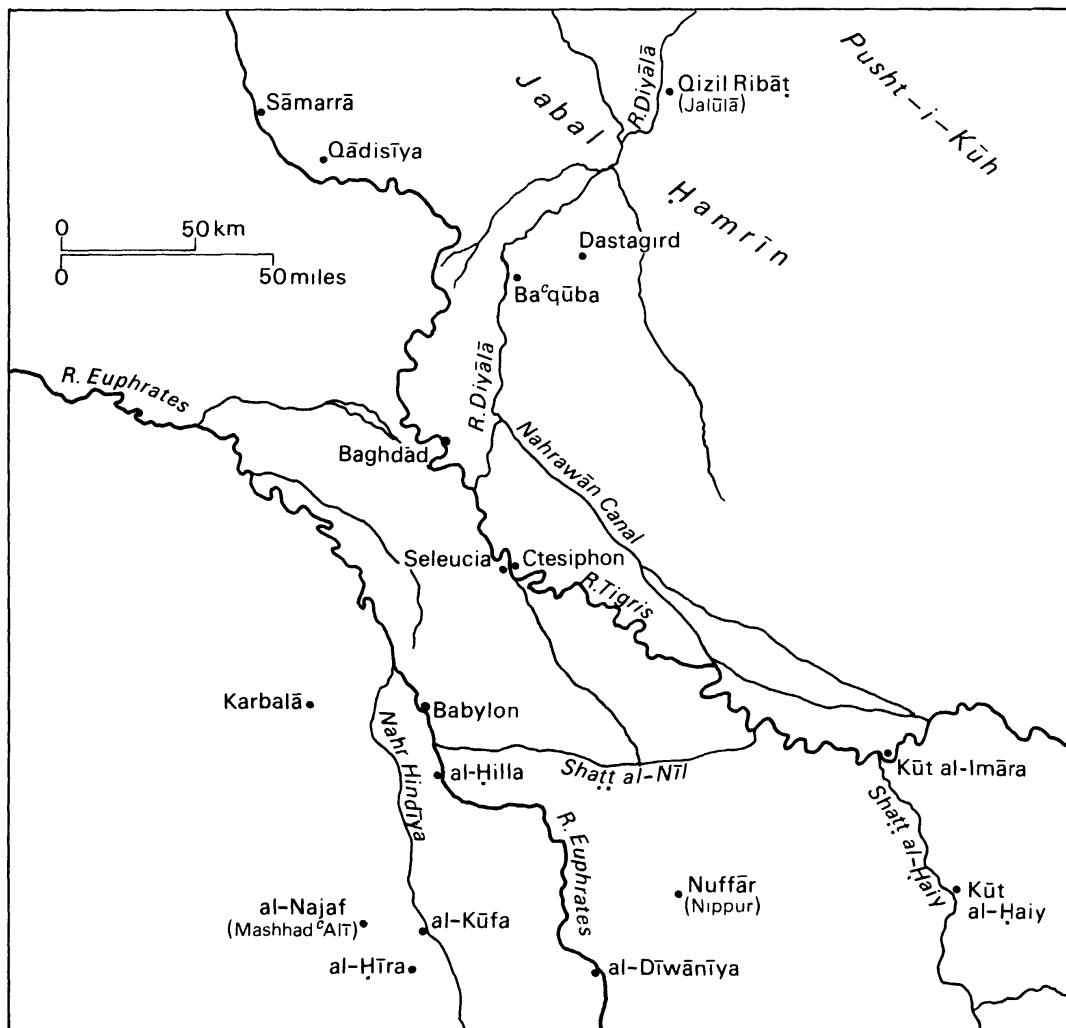
² Meissner, *Von Babylon nach den Ruinen von Ḥira und Huarnaq*.

³ Streck, “Seleucia und Ktesiphon”, pp. 1–64; Kühnel, “Die Ausgrabungen von Ktesiphon”, pp. 45ff; *idem*, “Die Ergebnisse der zweiten Ktesiphon-Expedition (Winter 1931/32)”, pp. 441–2; *idem*, *Die Ausgrabungen der zweiten Ktesiphon-Expedition (Winter 1931/32)*.

⁴ Mid. Pers. *Tyspwn*, Armen. Tisbon, known as Thesiphonta urbem to Aurelius Victor, Caes. 38, 3 (Carus A.D. 283), as Taisaqūn (in error for ḥfūn) or as Taisfūn(aj) to the Arabs and occurring in the *Šāh-nāma* of Firdausī as Taisafūn.

⁵ *Wjḥkw'ty* on a clay bulla of Qaṣr-i-Abū Naṣr at Shirāz.

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Map 8. Central Babylonia.

Aramaean Māhōzē, both meaning “the cities” in the plural, and not, as one might have supposed of the double city of Seleucia–Ctesiphon, in the dual. The name must have denoted the merging together of a group of several townships, a genuine multiple *synoikismos*, as the Greeks call it.

About thirty-two kilometres south of Baghdad stand the imposing ruins of the great palace of the rulers, the date of the building of which is still undecided. This is known as the Tāq-i-Kisrā, a long façade adorned with half-pillars, interrupted in the centre by an enormous east-facing doorway-arch, the *āivān*, 37 metres high and 27 metres broad, the largest intact brick arch in existence (pl. 83). In this throne-room all the governors of the empire assembled before the sovereign. There were two adjoining barrel-vaults; the one on the right (north) was brought down by the flooding of the Tigris in 1909.

Ctesiphon's fortunes as a city had been most varied. Twice it had been taken by the emperor Trajan; it had even been burned to the ground in the reign of Vologeses III; it had been conquered in A.D. 162 by the legate Verus, and pillaged in A.D. 197 by Septimius Severus; it was plundered by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius in A.D. 628; finally it was pillaged afresh by an Arab onslaught under the caliph 'Umar, to disappear for ever from history (A.D. 637). Not a vestige remains of another building, the "white palace", about one kilometre north of the Tāq. It was the desire of the caliph Mansūr (745–75) that all traces of Ctesiphon be totally obliterated when he selected the more northerly Baghdad for his residence. According to tradition, however, his Persian counsellor, the Barmakid Khālid, prevented his desire from being carried out.

The name Baghdad is Iranian; originally it is a man's name, Bagadāta (Armenian Bagarat), which means "given by God" or "created by God"; and later it is transferred to the place, signifying "township of B". The existence of some such name is in fact documented in cuneiform records, and it is attached to *"Ur-Bit" Ba-ga'-da-a-ti*, an Achaemenian town in the time of Artaxerxes I (465–25 B.C.). But this town was located near ancient Nippur – modern Tell Niffar/Nuffar north-east of Dīwāniya. And the place called *Bāgdā(t)* in the Talmud must likewise be sought elsewhere.¹ Probably there were other properties or estates in Iraq belonging to the same or another Iranian noble bearing this common name, and near the later Baghdad. Such estates, as mentioned in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, are called *dasākir* in Arabic – the plural of *daskara* – which is ultimately a borrowing from Old Persian *dasta-karta* "hand-made". For this reason Dastgird is a common place-name all over Iran. There was a famous Dastajird north-east of Ba'qūba in Iraq; to distinguish it from others, it was called Dastajird al-Malik, "the Dastgird of the king", because it was here that Khusrau II had taken up residence. After repeated destructions it still remained an important city in Islamic times.²

For our final example we take Hatra in the north. The impressive ruins of this city lie north-west of ancient Assur and west of the river Tharthār (174 kilometres from Mosul along the present motorway).³ In a sense Hatra, as a fortified base for Arab warring tribes, was the counterpart of Hira in the south. But whereas the latter word originally

¹ W. Eilers, "Der Name Demawend", *ArOr* xxii (1954), 329; *idem*, *Der alte Name des persischen Neujahrsfestes* (Wiesbaden, 1953), pp. 4¹, 5¹, 37.

² See the article "Daskara" by A. A. Duri in *Enc. Islam*².

³ Andrae, *Hatra* 1.

denoted a temporary encampment of nomads, al-*Had̄r* by contrast denotes a township that was meant to be permanent (Arabic *ḥāḍar* “settled population”, *ḥāḍara* “sedentariness”). At the time when Hatra appeared in history, it faced Roman garrisons in Commagene and Osroene as well as in Palmyra. The six-kilometre wall, forming an almost complete circle, and having a ditch (Persian *khandaq*) outside, is fortified with towers, and encloses a huge square with palace and temple buildings. The imposing masses of square hewn stone are adorned with cornices and medallion-like reliefs of the city gods (pl. 33 (a)–(c)).

Twice Hatra was besieged, but in vain. The first unsuccessful siege was mounted by the emperor Trajan on his return from Ctesiphon (A.D. 116), the second by Septimius Severus, whose army eventually began to mutiny in the face of the brave defenders of the city, and forced their commander to retreat (A.D. 198).¹ Shāpūr I (241–72) was the first to succeed in conquering the city, after it had traitorously joined the Romans (A.D. 250). On this occasion Hatra was so thoroughly razed that Arab geographers of the Middle Ages were no longer sure of its location.

Of the rulers of Hatra whose names we know, King Barsemius deserves mention.² With his troop of cavalry he fell upon Septimius Severus’ legions and set their siege-engines alight with naphtha. Another prince of Hatra was Sanaṭrūq,³ after whom the city was called Ḥatrā də-Sanaṭrū(q).⁴ His name in Arabic became Sāṭirūn, and he is supposed to be identical with Daizān, the last ruler of the city. A legend persists concerning his daughter Nadīra. It is said that when Shāpūr I was besieging the city she fell in love with him and secretly gave him entry into the city. And so, in the popular imagination of later generations, Hatra was the proud city that fell, a sacrifice on the altar of love.

In the long tradition of the cuneiform culture of Babylonia, which

¹ T. Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte* v (10th ed., Berlin, 1927), 411.

² Βαρσήμιος from the name of the god Bar-Ba'(al)-ṣəmīn. Cf. R. Degen, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* xxix (Leiden, 1972), 213b.

³ A common name of a ruler, but not before the Parthian period. Greek form Σανατρούκης, Σανατρούκιος; see F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Marburg, 1895), pp. 282ff; cf. P. J. Dashian *WZKM* iv (1890), pp. 144–60; J. Marquart *ZDMG* xl ix (1895), pp. 651, 653; H. Hübschmann, *Armenische Grammatik* 1 (Leipzig, 1897), p. 72, no. 162. W. Henning interpreted the name as the Iranian* *sāna-taru-ka-* “enemy-conquering” (“Mitteliranisch”, p. 41, n. 1). For what it is worth we suggest that it might be an Iranian *-uk* development from the Aram. *santū(ā)*, *σενάτωρ* *senator*.

⁴ G. Hoffmann, “Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer”, *AKM* vii, 3 (1880), 184ff; A. Caquot *Syria* xxix (1952), p. 112 n. 2.

often proved capable of adapting itself to new things (the Kassite period is a typical example), the empire of the Achaemenians marked an important turning-point, evidenced not so much in architecture and fine art as in correspondence and in speech (see below). The real break with ancient oriental tradition, here as elsewhere, was not effectively made, however, until the conquest of Alexander, which inaugurated Hellenism. This is proved by Greek transcriptions on clay tablets (e.g. $\gammaισιμαρ δομ δομ$ = gišimmar dumu = "palm shoot")¹ and a considerable amount of epigraphic material, including the enigmatic Greek inscription in the temple of a god named Gareus, from the Parthian city of Uruk and dated A.D. 110.² Babylon had its Greek theatre, excavated in 1904.³ From the early Seleucid period the figure of a Babylonian priest of Bēl symbolically stands out. It was Berossos, who tried to animate the Greeks with an interest in the ancient history and religion of the land of the two rivers, of which he was still a representative. His work entitled *Βαβυλωνιακά* or *Χαλδαικά* is preserved only in a few quotations. It was dedicated to Antiochus Soter and was probably a response to a western demand. But in the land of the two rivers there was never any real amalgamation with Greek elements.⁴

Parthian art or, more precisely, Mesopotamian art of the Arsacid period worked with borrowed elements of Greek fashion, but these quickly lost their essential character. The Parthian strata can be detected at many excavation sites, especially at Assur,⁵ at Babylon⁶ and at Uruk.⁷ Like the Seleucids the Arsacids were zealous founders or rebuilders of cities. Thus, near later Kūfa, the map shows us a Vologesia, called after the common Parthian personal name Vologeses.⁸

¹ Bibliography in W. G. Schileiko in *Archiv für Orientforschung* v (Berlin, 1928/29), 11–13; E. Sollberger, "Graeco-Babylonica", *Iraq* xxiv (1962), 63–72.

² Heinrich, "Uruk-Warka", pp. 33ff; the inscription itself was published by Christian Meier, "Ein griechisches Ehrendekret vom Gareus-Tempel in Uruk", *Baghdader Mitteilungen* vi (Berlin, 1960), 104–14.

³ Koldewey, *Babylon*, pp. iv, 293–9; Unger, *Babylon*, p. 41.

⁴ Cf. W. Eilers in *OLZ* xxiv (1931), col. 937, and especially P. Schnabel, *Berossos und die babylonisch-hellenistische Literatur* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1923). More recent literature is indicated in *Der kleine Pauly: Lexicon der Antike*, 1 (Stuttgart, 1964), col. 1548, s.v. "Beros(s)os" (W. Spoerri).

⁵ Andrae, *Assur*, pp. 171ff ("Die parthische Schicht"); Andrae and Lenzen, "Die Partherstadt Assur".

⁶ Koldewey, *Babylon*, *passim*, esp. pp. 210ff.

⁷ Jordan, "Uruk-Warka", *passim* and the plan of the city itself; Heinrich, "Uruk-Warka", pp. 30ff, tables 1, 12, 13, 20ff.

⁸ *Tabula Peutingeriana*; Pliny 6. 26. 30; Ptolemy 5. 20. 6; Stephanus Byz. s.v. See further in Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, v; later the name in Iranian took the form *Valaxš* > *Valāš* > *Balāš/Gulāš* and can be traced in modern place-names.

As far away as India and Central Asia Greek influence is discernible, especially in pictorial art, and is widely recognizable in the flowing style of clothing. The Berlin Museum possesses two equestrian figures in painted clay, wearing Parthian clothes with their characteristic trousers (pl. 34),¹ such as we still find portrayed in similar equestrian pieces on Sasanian reliefs, and also on silver dishes even in the early Islamic period.

Vessels discovered in Iraq, as well as the sarcophagi, dating from the Parthian period onwards, are characterized by a dark green glaze, shading into blue. Nude female dancers with veils reflect the hedonistic commonplace philosophy of Hellenism, even on the "slipper sarcophagi" (so called by the excavators) of the Parthian period.² Special mention is deserved by the stucco decoration of palace walls, with their typical patterns and medallions, yielded up especially from the soil of late Sasanian Ctesiphon (pl. 35(a)–(e)).³ This is undoubtedly an imitation of what was originally wood-carving which, in treeless Iraq, had to make do with plaster and clay. Sasanian, too, are the copper pots, with their crooked, projecting beaks, such as are still used in Arab countries today, especially in Iraq.

Now we may consider the relationship of Iran to Babylon in the linguistic and literary sector. To begin with it was the land of the two rivers that took the lead. It is true that at the time when Sumerian script was invented, corresponding attempts were not lacking in the highlands, at Kāshān and Kirmān, in Susa and elsewhere.⁴ Even in the period of cuneiform script the Elamite stroke-script was still prominent, but this, too, was soon superseded by the Sumerian–Akkadian syllabary and ideographic system, which took over in the highlands of Iran as everywhere else. Finally, however, Iran evolved its own cuneiform script, the old Persian script of the Achaemenian period, the origins of which are still not certain; but vestiges of ideograms, fragments of old syllabic writing, and a certain absence of system allow us to conjecture that this script, before it fell into the mould of alphabetical characters,

¹ The old Iranian word for trousers was *šara-bāra-*, and now is *šalvār*, which reappears in Aram. T. as *sarbāl*, in Syr. as *šarbālā*, in Arab. as *sirbāl/sirwāl*; see Eilers in *IJ* v (1961), p. 205; the absence of this word in Armenian borrowings is striking.

² According to Koldewey, *Babylon*, pp. 214ff and fig. 133; Andrae, *Assur*, p. 188; Heinrich, "Uruk-Warka", p. 32.

³ Kühnel, "Der Stuckdekor von Ktesiphon", in *Bericht über die Jahrbundertfeier des Archäologischen Instituts* (Berlin, 1930), pp. 346ff.

⁴ Eilers, "Iran zwischen Ost und West", in W. Eilers (ed.), *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans* (Stuttgart, 1971), pp. 23ff.

had its antecedents – unknown to us – in regions where the Mesopotamian cuneiform script held sway, such as Urartu beyond Media, but probably not in Elam.

None the less in those days the cuneiform tradition was already being challenged, and in the end it was overthrown by the acceptance of Aramaic script, first in Iraq and later in Iran. Typical of the Aramaicizing of the land of the two rivers in this time is an Aramaic incantation from the later period of Uruk, written in cuneiform script.¹ The court and the priesthood were still using this ancient, indigenous script for official purposes. In this practice the Assyrian kings were followed by first the Chaldaean and then the Persian emperors.² Alongside the official stone inscriptions of the Achaemenians, in the three traditional languages (Babylonian, Elamite, Old Persian), parchment and papyrus records and the use of soot-ink also took their place, for the domestic use of the Achaemenian administration. It was with these materials, and in the Aramaic tongue, that the sovereign corresponded with his satraps, and these, in turn, with other officials. From this “imperial Aramaic”, as Markwart has called it, there evolved the Parthian script, which was first used for official documents in Parthian times, and Pahlavi script, the earliest form of which is found in the rock inscriptions of the Sasanian kings.³ The art of writing and the Aramaic script were transmitted beyond Iran to India (Old Indian *lipi*- “writing” corresponds to Old Persian *dipi*- and Old Indian *pustā*- “book” to New Persian *pūst* “skin”). The Phoenician alphabet must also have passed through Iran to the Indians, who developed their own Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī scripts from it, eventually using these to write down their sacred scriptures. The Avesta, too, was ultimately put into writing; when, where, and how this was done is disputed. The Avesta alphabet, which makes use of vowel letters, undoubtedly on a Greek model, is

¹ *Textes cunéiformes du Louvre*, vi (Paris, 1922), p. 58, first revised by P. Jensen, *Der aramäische Beschwörungstext in spätbabylonischer Keilschrift* (Marburg, 1926); see also P. O. Bostrup, “Aramäische Ritual-texte in Keilschrift”, *AO* v (1927), 257–301; C. H. Gordon, “The Aramaic Incantation in Cuneiform”, *Archiv für Orientforschung* xii (Berlin, 1937–9), 105–17. There is also a parallel from Egypt; see R. A. Bowman, “An Aramaic Text in Demotic Script”, *JNES* iii (1944), 219–31.

² The Persian title “great king” (*xašyāθiya vazraka*, μέγας βασιλεύς), like “king of kings” (*xašyāθiya xašyāθiyānām*, βασιλεὺς βασιλέων, Mid. Pers. *šābān-šāb* > New Pers. *šābinšāh*) goes back to the ancient oriental models of Babylonia and Assyria, no matter how foreign the imagery behind the expression is to the Aryan mind. Admittedly the term *mahā rāja* of the Indians is a translation-borrowing from the Persian west.

³ The three cuneiform versions at the tomb of Darius I in Naqš-i-Rustam (NRb) were accompanied by an Aramaic version, no longer legible; there is a transcription of the few vestiges in E. Herzfeld, *Altperische Inschriften* (Berlin, 1938), p. 12.

based on the Pahlavī–Aramaic alphabet.¹ The civilizing influence of Babylonia was thus of the greatest importance for the religion of Iran.

In language also the two worlds mutually penetrated one another, and it is especially in language that the Iranian–Semitic cultural encounter – to use an apt phrase of G. Widengren² – is most clearly manifest. Sumerian–Akkadian loan-words had, at an early date, reached the highlands from Iraq – words such as the Sumerian *dub* (Akk. *tuppum*) “clay tablet” becoming OP *dipi* “(piece of) writing”, and Akkadian *maškum* “skin bag” becoming OP *maškā* (fem.). Even in the later Avesta Iraqi–Aramaic loan-words are not unknown; in the *Vendidad*, for example, we find *tanura* (neut.) “oven” (Akk. *tinūrum*, Arabic *tannūr*) and *tūtuk* (fem.) “clay” (Akk. *tiṭṭum*/*tiṭum*, Arabic *ṭīn*). In the Achaemenian period the reverse process is to be observed. Iranian technical terms – the names for trades and officials, for example – infiltrated the plains³ – *dātabara* “judge” (NP *dā(d)var*), *ganzabara* “master of the treasury” (NP *ganjūr*), *piðfa-bara* “distributor of rations”, *hamāra-kara* “paymaster, finance minister”,⁴ *xsāθra-pāna* “satrap” (Armenian *šahap*), *apadāna* “palace” (NP *aivān*), *uz-bāra* “(royal) demesne” – and others still unexplained. The plant-name *aspasti* “lucerne” (NP *aspist*) is recorded in cuneiform script in Iraq even before the days of the Achaemenians.⁵

Although it was not until the Arab invasion that the Persian language became saturated with foreign loan-words, in modern Persian there is still a small Semitic stratum that came into the language before the Arab period, e.g.

rīmā “unicorn, wild bull” (Sem. *ri’im-*),
šaidā “mad with love”, “demon” (Akk. *šēdum*),
yaldā “mid-winter, nativity (of Christ)” (Sem. *w / d*),
dābul, *dākhū* “scarecrow” (Aram. *dah^alūlā*),
afyān/fuyān “alas!” < *bəgān* (late Babylonian *ba-ga-ni(-')*).⁶

¹ K. Hoffmann, “Zum Zeicheninventar der Avesta-Schrift”, in *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans* (Stuttgart, 1971), pp. 64–73, with table on p. 168.

² G. Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung in parthischer Zeit*.

³ Eilers, “Iranische Beamtennamen I”, *AKM* xxv. 5 (1940); *idem*, “Die altiranische Vorform des Vāspuhr”, in W. B. Henning and E. Yar-Shater (eds.), *A Locust’s Leg: Studies in Honour of S. H. Taqizadeh* (London, 1962), pp. 55–63.

⁴ J. C. Greenfield, in M. Boyce and I. Gershevitch (eds.), *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume* (London, 1970), pp. 180–6.

⁵ B. Meissner in *ZA* vi (Leipzig, 1891), 296; H. Zimmern, *Akkadische Fremdwörter* (Leipzig, 1916/17), p. 56.

⁶ For bibliography see D. R. Hillers in *BASOR* ccvii (1972), 55.

These are all evidence of the spread of Aramaic education and the use of Aramaic as a *lingua franca* at that time. Such words, not to be confused with the Pahlavi ideograms (the so-called *huzvārīsh*), had thus found their way into Iranian from Aramaic without any intermediary.

A whole book would be required in order to list from the Arabic dictionaries all those words, the Middle Iranian form of which proves the existence of a post-Achaemenian but pre-Islamic borrowing from Iranian languages; the following Arabic roots are examples.¹

d b r II “to plan, organize”: *dipīr* = “scribe”

d w n II “to list, register”: *dīvān* = “collection of writings”

d y n “to profess one’s faith”: *dēn* = “religion”

δ b r “to write, read over”: cf. *d b r*

d b r “to document, collect”: cf. *d b r*

f t ḫ II “to test, investigate”: *pītāx* “the name of an official”

χ z n “to store, preserve”: *yazn* “treasure” (Median form)

k n z “to hoard, bury”: *ganj* “treasure”

m b r I/II “to seal”: *mehr* “seal”

n m q II “to write elegantly, adorn”: *nāmak* “letter, book”

r s m I/II “to write down”: cf. *r z m*

r z m “to bundle”: *razm* “order”

r z q “to nourish, bestow”: *rōzīy* “daily bread”

s r j II “to saddle”: *sary* “saddle”

z n d q “to practise witchcraft”: *zandīy*

z w q II “to adorn”: *zībāy* (Median form)

z w r II “to lie, falsify”: *zūr* “lie, violence”

Words like *līwān* < *al-iwān* < *aiwān* assumed the Arabic article *al-* > *l-* only later.²

Widengren regards the Adiabene, which at first belonged to the Arsacids and then, as part of the Roman province of Assyria, fell under the sway of the west (conquered in A.D. 116 by Trajan), as the bridge in the Parthian era between Semitic Mesopotamia and Iran proper, and here he has chiefly in mind exchanges of literature and “Weltanschauung”. The Adiabene is the country between upper and lower Zāb, that is the land of the Kurds; and the Kurdish vocabulary does in fact contain numerous expressions which were borrowed directly from the old Semitic Iraq before the Arab period, and which are foreign to all other Iranian dialects.³

¹ Eilers, “Iranisches Lehngut im Arabischen Lexicon”, *IJ* v (1961), 203–32.

² E. Herzfeld in *AMI* vi (1934), 88n1; M. N. Bogoljubov in *Palestinskiy Sbornik* LXXVIII (Moscow and Leningrad, 1966), 43.

³ Eilers in *OLZ* LXIV (1969), cols. 48ff.

In literature, too, the land of the two rivers stands in the closest relationship with its neighbours. Ancient material, often as early as Sumerian, found its way westwards (e.g. the story of the Flood in the Old Testament), and also northwards, where it appears among the Hurrians and the Hittites (*Gilgamesh*). There is an Aramaic version of the *Ahīqar* tale, and it turns up again in Egypt, in the Elephantine papyri of the Jewish military colony of the Achaemenian empire. As *Haiqar*, the wise vizier lives on in Arabian folk-tales (*The Thousand and One Nights*).

The land of the two rivers lay open to all sides, and has always been a melting-pot of races and cultures. Through it eastern writings, too, streamed into the west. The Sasanian empire was the mediator of Indian culture, from which came not only the game of chess (the game of *nard*, backgammon, is considered an Iranian counter-invention), but also the great collection of fables known as the *Panchatantra*, Persian *Kalīla va Dimna*. Other tales existed already in the enriched Iranian form as “The Thousand Tales” (*bazār afsānak*). This was augmented by further material from the Semitic world of Iraq, and in the Islamic Middle Ages grew into the collection known as *The Thousand and One Nights*.¹ The strength of the Iranian–Iraqi element in this is obvious on almost every page, especially in the proper names used; even the name of the heroine, Sheherezade, is Persian: *Chīhrāzād*. Sindbād, the sailor, also has a Persian name.

There is yet another subject we must add to those which so often feature in Persian romance and poetry, and in the miniature painting that accompanies them; that is falconry, which was so popular in medieval Europe as well. There is evidence of this sport already in ancient Mesopotamia,² whither it may well have come from the eastern mountain civilizations. At all events, among Aramaeans, Arabs and Armenians, the words for falcon and falconer as well as other expressions related to falconry are borrowings from Iran (Aram. *bāzā|i* and *bāzīqā*; Armen. *bazai/bazē*; Arab. *bāz*).³

Religious thought and practice in highlands and plains intermingled from early times. Images on seals portray the same motifs. The Kassites

¹ See A. Christensen, *Märchen aus Iran* (Jena, 1939), Introduction.

² B. Meissner, “Falkenjagden bei den Babylonieren und Assyren”, *Beiträge zur Assyriologie* IV (Leipzig, 1902), 418–22.

³ Eilers, “Iranisches Lehngut”, p. 224; U. Schapka, “Persische Vogelnamen” (Würzburger Dissertation, 1972), pp. 13f, no. 49.

brought fresh motifs from the middle Zagros to Babylonia leading to the emergence of the *kudurru* documents. Their gods, like those of the Elamites before them, became identified with the Sumerian–Akkadian pantheon. The tree of life and fecundating genii¹ are characteristic of Assyrian reliefs, as they are of the Lūristān bronzes.² In the Achaemenian period there came fresh fusions. That god of enigmatic origin, Tir (seen in Tiridates, etc.) of the Iranians, corresponds to the old god Nebo (Nabium), the glittering planet Mercury.³ In the Aramaean syncretism of Hatra, Dura-Europos, and Palmyra the ancient oriental gods seem to be clothed in Iranian ideas and interspersed with like figures from the Greek pantheon; nor is the ancient Arabic element missing.

From a very early date, perhaps even from pre-Achaemenian times, special importance attached to the Jewish–Iranian relationship. A recollection of this relationship is probably preserved in the book of Tobit, who used to travel about between Nineveh and Rhages (Ray). Certainly after the conquest of the northern kingdom of Samaria by Sargon (722 B.C.), many Jews settled in Assyria, as we know from cuneiform legal documents.⁴ The connection was even closer in the Achaemenian era;⁵ it is possible, indeed, that Jews of the Exile made their contribution to the unarmed invasion of Cyrus (539 B.C.).⁶ The Esther story of the Old Testament seems to refer not to Xerxes, but to Artaxerxes I Longimanus (465–25), one of whose wives bore the Babylonian name Kosmartydene (i.e. *“Qus-mārta-iddina”*). In any event, “Esther” is a form of the Iranian word *stāra* “star” (NP *sitāra*) and in the sense of star-flower (as the Jewish form *Hădassah* instructs us) is the myrtle blossom, still so cherished by Zoroastrians. Through the concept of a “God of heaven”, wise Jews like Ezra sought to interest the Mazda-worshipping Iranians in the tribal God of the Jews; and with the collaboration of Nehemiah, cup-bearer to the king of kings,

¹ Cf. B. Hrouda, “Zur Herkunft des assyrischen Lebensbaumes” in *Baghdader Mitteilungen* III (Berlin, 1964), 41ff.

² On their chronological setting see P. Calmeyer, *Datierbare Bronzen aus Luristan und Kirmanshah* (Berlin, 1969).

³ Cf. W. B. Henning quoted by A. D. H. Bivar, “A rosette *phialē* inscribed in Aramaic”, *BSOAS* xxiv (1961), 191; Eilers, *Semiramis* (Vienna, 1971) pp. 43ff.

⁴ Sina Schiffer, *Keilinschriftliche Spuren . . . der deportierten Samarier* (Berlin, 1907); *idem*, *Die Aramäer: historisch-geographische Untersuchungen* (Leipzig, 1911).

⁵ See, for example, E. Ebeling, “Aus dem Leben der jüdischen Exulanten in Babylonien”, *Wissenschaftliche Beilage zum Jahresbericht des Humboldt-Gymnasiums Berlin* (Easter 1914).

⁶ Eilers, “Der Keilschrifttext des Kyros-Zylinders” in W. Eilers (ed.), *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans* (Stuttgart, 1971), pp. 156ff.

the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem, destroyed under Nebuchadnezzar, was accomplished.¹ Babylon became the centre of Jewry. It was here that both the Mishna and the Talmud were composed, and the so-called Babylonian vocalization dominated their manuscripts. The vocabulary and proper names in the Talmud unite the Aramaic-Akkadian world with the Persian-Iranian world through hundreds of borrowings.²

The liberal-minded ruler Yazdgard I went so far as to marry *Shūshandukht* (Susannah), a daughter of the Jewish exiliarch (*rēš gālūtā*) in Babylon, who thus became numbered among the dignitaries of the empire.³ In those days the seat of the exiliarch was at Maḥōzē, that is to say Madā'in-Ctesiphon; but later al-Hilla on the Euphrates, six kilometres from the ruins of Babylon, became the central town of the Jews in Iraq.

Like Judaism, the Christian religion was a considerable force in the Sasanian empire, and, once again, its influence was concentrated in Iraq. By the 3rd century this region, with the inclusion of northern Mesopotamia and the region around Susa, had been divided into a series of dioceses, with episcopal sees at Sinjār, Arbela, Kirkūk, Hulwān and others, and in Babylonia proper, in Mesene and Khūzistān.⁴ Under the Sasanian dynasty the Mazdayasnian faith constituted the state religion, and so conflicts were bound to arise; these reached a climax in the persecution of Christians by Shāpūr II (310-79). When in A.D. 379 Theodosius I became emperor and Christianity became virtually the official religion of the western Roman empire and the emperor the protector of all Christians, the Christians of the Sasanian empire fell under suspicion, not unfounded, of conspiring with enemies of the state in the west. Hence it became the aim of the sovereigns either to convert or reclaim Christians to Mazdaism or, failing this, to separate them from their fellow Christians in the Roman empire. This was achieved, however, only when, in the course of the Christological controversy, the supporters of Nestorius (d. c. A.D. 451) separated from the later Jacobites of Edessa and spread their own dogma amongst the Christians of the Persian empire. They carried on a far-flung mission,

¹ H. H. Schaefer, *Esra der Schreiber* (Tübingen, 1930).

² S. Telegdi, "Essai sur la phonétique des emprunts iraniens en araméen talmudique", *JA* 1935, pp. 177ff.

³ Christensen, *L'Iran*, pp. 38, 110, 272, 388.

⁴ See the synoptic table no. 1 in Gernot Wiessner, "Untersuchungen zu einer Gruppe syrischer Märtyrerakten" (Würzburger dissertation, 1962).

based in Iraq; they penetrated Central Asia and reached as far as India and China (there is a Nestorian-Syrian inscription from Singafu dated A.D. 781), and it was the Nestorians who transmitted the heritage of later antiquity to the Muslims. Although strife repeatedly flared up with the zealous clergy of the Sasanian state church, the Christians of Mesopotamia and Armenia enjoyed a respected position. Khusrau II (590–627) even married the Byzantine emperor's daughter Maria; but his other wife, the famed Shīrīn, also a Christian, lives on to this day in the most elevated tradition of poetry and miniature painting as well as in the touching tale of simple people, as the gracious ideal of womanhood.¹

The drama of the foundation of a new world-religion, which shook both the Christian west and Zoroastrian Iran, was also enacted in Mesopotamia; this religion was Manichaeism. Mānī, a Parthian on his mother's side, was born at Ctesiphon in the last decade of the Arsacid era (A.D. 216). His dualistic doctrine, in some respects a final outcome of Zoroastrianism, quickly spread from Babylonia to the west, to be accepted by the youthful St Augustine, later a Father of the Christian church, and also far into the east, where as late as the 8th century it became accepted as the state religion by the Turkish Uighurs in Chinese Turkestan. In his Iranian homeland, however, Mānī had little success. At first he was regarded with sympathy and interest by Shāpūr I (242–73) to whom he dedicated his book, *Shāpūrakān*, but soon he incurred the hatred of the *mōbads*, and in A.D. 276 died a martyr under Bahrām I. The place of his death was the prison of Bēlābād (i.e. Bēt-Lāpāt), renamed Gundēshāpūr, at Shushtar in the province of Susa.

A genuine product of Iraqi-Iranian syncretism is to be found in the Mandaeans of southern Babylonia, sometimes called Sabians or Nazoraeans, of whom a remnant can be found today, many of them silversmiths, along the Shatṭ al-‘Arab and around Ḥawīza (Huwaiza) in Khūzistān. These are a gnostic baptist sect having rituals and scriptures of their own. Learned discussion still goes on about their origin and antecedents. Linguistically they continue, in some measure, the now extinct Aramaic of Mesopotamia, with its Sumerian-Akkadian substratum; but their language is also strongly imbued with Iranian elements. The Mandaeans have recently become the object of important research, which is trying to understand the chief elements of their

¹ Eilers, *Semiramis*, pp. 47ff. and elsewhere.

worship and practice, which sooner or later will be threatened with extinction.

Likewise unexplained are the origins of Yazidis in Iraqi Kurdistān and the region of Sinjār, north-east and west of Mosul. As their common name “devil-worshippers” indicates, they offer to Satan, as Peacock-angel (Malak Ṭā’ūs), divine worship, in which is possibly to be seen an aspect of the ancient Iranian cult of Ahriman.¹ The sacrifice of white bullocks in honour of the rising and setting sun is reminiscent, too, of the Achaemenian era.² Ancient oriental heathen elements seem to have been overlaid with Jewish-Christian-Muslim elements, and even their secret transmission in a Kurdish idiom presents inexplicable contradictions. As Kurds they belong with their Yazidi dialect to the Iranian nation, but like many other Kurds they are Iraqi citizens. They must have a long history, but their origins remain unknown.³

In conclusion, we must not forget that to a large extent the intellectual foundations of the secular world found their ultimate synthesis in the Iraq of the Persian empire. This synthesis enabled them to penetrate the culture of neighbouring countries in all subsequent ages. It was the assimilation of ancient oriental culture into the Achaemenian empire and its Iranian successor states that first gave “Babylonism” the vast world-historical perspective that is still evident on all sides.

There is, for example, the system of measurement and its standardization; the division of the circle into 360 degrees; the division of a day into twelve hours; and astronomy and the calendar in general. It is not for nothing that astrologers were called “Chaldaeans”, for their true home was in Aramaean southern Babylon, in Uruk which, especially in the Seleucid-Parthian period, was the centre of ancient astronomy and interpretation of the stars. The latest-dated cuneiform texts include clay tablets from this place containing astronomical observations; these texts come from the 1st century A.D. The Greeks made use of the results and developed the basic principles further. The Persians avidly assimilated these doctrines and incorporated them in their religious system, to be finally recorded in the Pahlavī books known as the *Dēnkart* and the *Bundahishn*.⁴ Then the function of the Chaldaeans was taken over by the Magi. By *μάγοι/μαγονσαῖοι* “Magians” Euro-

¹ Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 46.

² Cf. Xenophon, *Cyrop.*, 8. 7.

³ Eilers in RGG III, cols. 171-3, s.v. “Jeziden”.

⁴ D. N. MacKenzie, “Zoroastrian Astrology in the *Bundahišn*”, BSOAS xxvii (1964), 511-29.

peans do not now denote the old priesthood of the Medes,¹ but the wise men and interpreters of stars who came from the east and who figure in the Nativity Gospel.² So it is not surprising that the name of the great preacher of salvation to the Iranian nation, Zarathustra, came, in Greek ears, to have the ring of astrology about it, although it had nothing at all to do with stars; the Greek is *Zωροάστρης*, which has smuggled in the word *ἀστήρ/ἀστρον* “a star”.

Along with the astronomical cosmology of the land of the two rivers, the Persians took over also the Babylonian calendar, according to which the year began on the first night of spring (20 March). Its most beautiful festival, Naurūz “New Day” or Navasard “New Year”, was the old Babylonian new year festival on the first of Nisān, when the god Marduk decided afresh the fate of mankind. On Iranian soil, the Naurūz festival has continued unbroken to the present day as the great national festival;³ and even the cheerful observance of Sizdah-bi-dar, when all the inhabitants take to the open air on the thirteenth of Farvardīn in order to escape bad luck, has an ancient oriental origin. All large cities in Babylon and Assur, as the ritual texts declare, and as archaeological discoveries confirm, owned a special new year festival house (*bit akīti*) outside the gates, to which, in the reawakening of springtime, everyone went, some by boat along the canals, in solemn procession led by the priests and bearing the statues of their gods.⁴

The music which accompanied this event may well have been related to later music. At all events Islamic musical terminology was based in part upon Sasanian practice, with which the Arabs came into the closest contact in Iraq. The terms for the highest and the lowest note on stringed instruments, *zīr* and *bām*, are Persian, as also are the names of the keys: *ya(k)-kāh*, *dū-kāh*, *sī-kāh*, *jahār-kāh*, and in addition, *Buzurk*, *Kurdān*, *Māhūrān*, *Nawā*, *Rāt*, *Zankūla*, etc. Some musical instruments, too, in the Islamic world, bear Iranian names: *nai* “flute”, *zurnā*, *sūrnā*⁵ “oboe”, *sitār* “small lute”, *kamāna* “violin” and others.

¹ Herodotus 1. 101.

² G. Messina, *I magi a Betlemme* (Rome, 1933); V. Minorsky, “Two Iranian Legends in Abū Dulaf’s Second Risāla” in G. C. Miles (ed.), *Archaeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld* (New York, 1952), pp. 172–8.

³ Cf. Eilers, *Der alte Name des persischen Neujahrfestes*, esp. pp. 54f.

⁴ On Uruk see Falkenstein, *Topographie*, pp. 42ff; on Babylon see Unger, *Babylon*, p. 159 and elsewhere; on Assur see Andrae, *Assur*, pp. 5, 151ff. and the upper left corner of the city plan.

⁵ In Iraq *serānīč* “flutes” may be the plural of a Mid. Pers. *surnāk* or may represent Gk *σύριγγες*.

Pictorial art, carving and miniature painting have left us many scenes featuring musicians holding banquets. Even the refined cuisine of the courtly civilization of the Sasanian empire was adopted by the Arabs in Iraq. In the process charming misunderstandings were perpetrated by the simple sons of the desert, and these were recorded, not without malicious undertones, by the Persian chroniclers. Thus the Islamic art of cooking took over along with the dishes and dainties their names as well: names like *pālūdak* in the form *fālūdhaj*, a vermicelli-like strained starch pudding which under the name *pālūda* is still a favourite. Many of the names for fruits and vegetables, too, are Persian: *bēdinjān* “aubergine”, *tiqqī* “mulberry” < *tūtkī*, as in Kurdish.

We can add to this several names of kitchen utensils:
 Arab. *tāwa* “fat bowl” < Pers. *tāva/tāba* “frying pan”,
śīnī “porcelain”,
ibrīq “water-jug”,
farfūrī “porcelain”;
 and in modern Iraq:

čefčīr “big spoon” (NP *kafgīr* “froth-skimmer”),
‘krafes “celery” (NP *kalafs*, *karafs*),
māš “vetch”,
tun(e)g “small clay water-bottle” (Mod. Pers. *tung*).

Many names of measures found their way into the Aramaic of Achaemenian Iraq, and these are preserved in modern Arabic. There are, for example: Arab. *irdabb/ardabb* “a large measure of capacity” (almost 200 lit.), Aram. *ardabā*, Akk. *ardabu*,¹ Old Iran. **ārtā-pā-* “meal chest” (μέτρον Μηδικὸν σίτου > ἀρτάβη, almost 60 lit.), Arab. *qafīz* “a large measure of capacity”, Aram. (Syr.) *qafīzā* < Old Iran. **kapačiya* from *kap-* “to hold, contain” (Lat. *capere*)² > Mid. Pers. *kapīč*, Mod. Pers. *kavīz* > *καπίθη* (over 2 lit.), Armen. *kapič*. On the other hand Mod. Pers. *sīr* (now about 75 gm) can be traced back through an Aramaic intermediary form *s(t)tr* (Akkadian *is-ta-tir-ru*) to the Greek *στατήρ* (variable, about 10 gm, like a shekel).

The fondness of the Persians for the fraction one-sixth may also be Mesopotamian in origin. This designation is based upon the word *dāng* the precise meaning of which is “part” (*dān(a)k*),³ but by which is meant in fact one-sixth. And so one says, and writes, too, in legal and

¹ See C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1928), and W. von Soden in *OLZ* LXVII (1972), col. 349. ² H. W. Bailey in *TPS* 1954, pp. 150ff.

³ Eilers *Die Welt des Orients* II (Göttingen, 1954-9), pp. 332ff.

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commercial documents, *šaš dāng xāna* “6/6 house”, i.e. a complete house, and *si dāng zamin* “3/6 ground” i.e. half of a plot of land. We encounter this reckoning in sixths as early as the cuneiform texts of Mesopotamia, where there are special symbols and words for it: the symbol \triangleleft denotes the word *šus* i.e. Akkadian *šusšum* $<$ *šudšum* the “sixth”; a third $\triangleleft\triangleleft$ (i.e. 2/6) is the dual of this (*šusšān*); two-thirds (4/6) is registered by “two parts” (*šini'pu*, *šini'pat*), and five-sixths is called a “large part” (*parab* $<$ *paras rab*). We must note here, that the Sumerian words for 1/6, 2/6 (= 1/3), 4/6 (= 2/3) and 5/6 are borrowed from Akkadian, so that the method of reckoning in sixths may be not Sumerian, but Semitic in origin.

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The abbreviations used in the bibliographies and footnotes are listed below.

AA *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (Beiblatt zum Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts) (Berlin)
AAWG *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Göttingen)
AAntASH *Acta antiqua academie scientiarum Hungaricae* (Budapest)
AArchASH *Acta archaeologica academie scientiarum Hungaricae* (Budapest)
AB *Analecta Bollandiana* (Brussels)
Acta Iranica *Acta Iranica* (encyclopédie permanente des études iraniennes) (Tehran–Liège–Leiden)
Aevum *Aevum* (Rassegna di Scienze Storiche Linguistiche e Filologiche) (Milan)
AGWG *Abhandlungen der (königlichen) Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Berlin)
AI *Ars Islamica = Ars Orientalis* (Ann Arbor, Mich.)
AION *Annali: Istituto Orientale di Napoli* (s.l. sezione linguistica; n.s. new series) (Naples)
AJSLL *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* (Chicago)
AKM *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* (Leipzig)
AMI *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* (old series 9 vols 1929–38; new series 1968–) (Berlin)
Anatolia *Anatolia* (revue annuelle d'archéologie) (Ankara)
ANS American Numismatic Society
ANSMN *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* (New York)
ANSNNM American Numismatic Society Numismatic Notes and Monographs (New York)
ANSNS American Numismatic Society Numismatic Studies (New York)
Antiquity *Antiquity* (a periodical review of archaeology edited by Glyn Daniel) (Cambridge)
AO *Acta Orientalia* (ediderunt Societates Orientales Batava Danica Norvegica Svedica) (Copenhagen)
AOAW *Anzeiger der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Vienna)
AOH *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (Budapest)
APAW *Abhandlungen der Preussischen (Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Berlin)
Apollo *Apollo* (The magazine of the arts) (London)
ArOr *Archiv Orientální* (Quarterly Journal of African, Asian and Latin American Studies) (Prague)
Artibus *Artibus Asiae* (Institute of Fine Arts, New York University)
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<i>ASIR</i>	<i>Archaeological Survey of India</i> . Reports made during the years 1862- by Alexander Cunningham, 23 vols. Simla-Calcutta, 1871-87.
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i> (Baltimore, Maryland)
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i> (Athens-Paris)
<i>BCMA</i>	<i>The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art</i> (Cleveland, Ohio)
<i>BEFEO</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient</i> (Hanoi-Paris)
<i>Berytus</i>	<i>Berytus</i> (archaeological studies published by the Museum of Archaeology and the American University of Beirut) (Copenhagen)
<i>BMQ</i>	<i>British Museum Quarterly</i> (London)
<i>BSO(A)S</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies</i> (University of London)
<i>Byzantion</i>	<i>Byzantion</i> (Revue Internationale des Études Byzantines) (Brussels)
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<i>CII</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</i> (Oxford)
<i>CIr</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum</i> (London)
<i>CRAI</i>	<i>Comptes rendus de l' Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres</i> (Paris)
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> (Paris, Louvain)
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna)
<i>DOAW</i>	<i>Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i> (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Vienna)
<i>East and West</i>	<i>East and West</i> (Quarterly published by the Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Orient) (Rome)
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<i>VDI</i>	<i>Vestnik drevnei istorii</i> (Moscow)
<i>WVDOG</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft</i> (Leipzig)
<i>WZKM</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i> (Vienna)
<i>YCS</i>	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i> (New Haven, Conn.)
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i> (Berlin)
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i> (Wiesbaden)
<i>ZN</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Numismatik</i> (Berlin)

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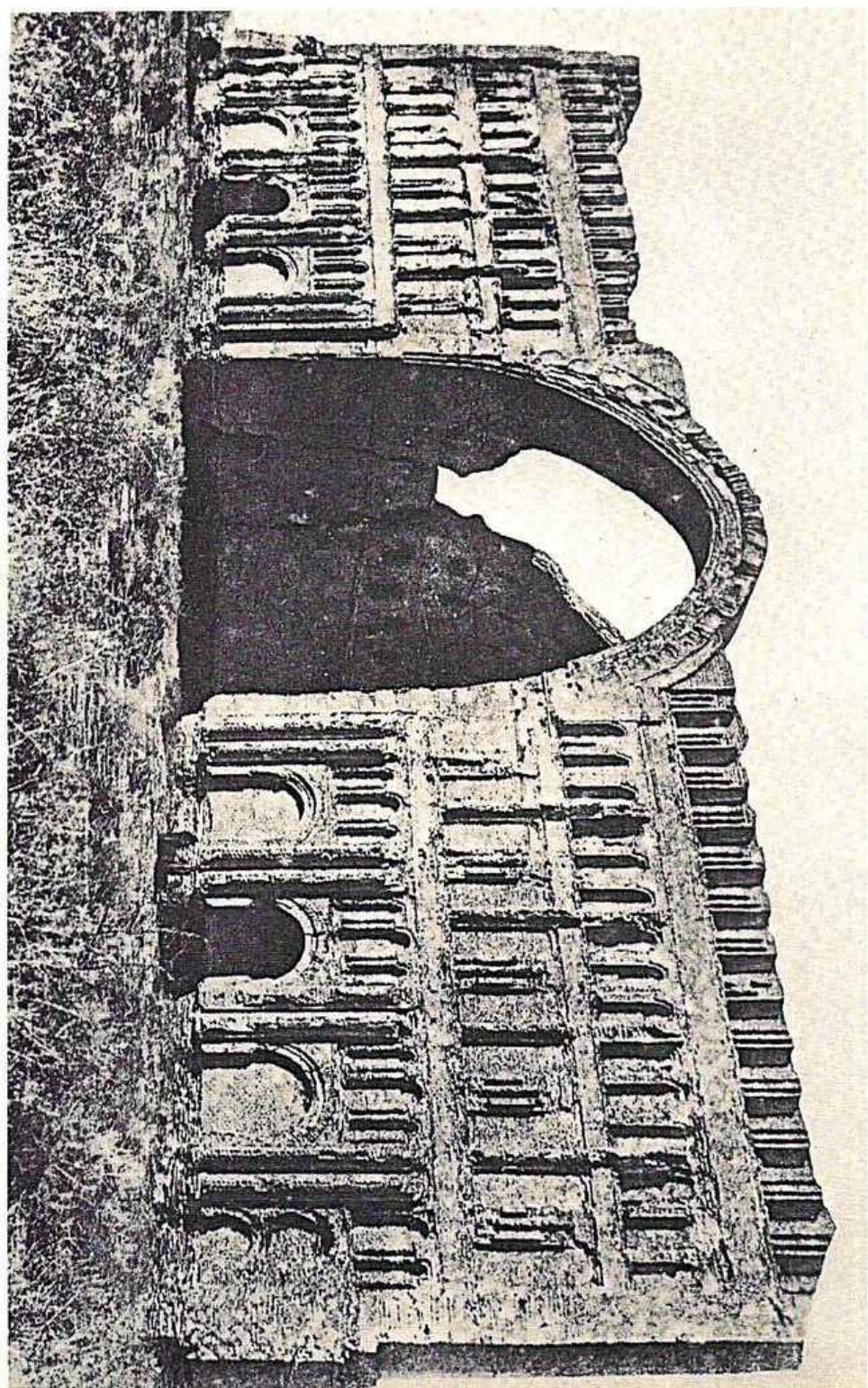
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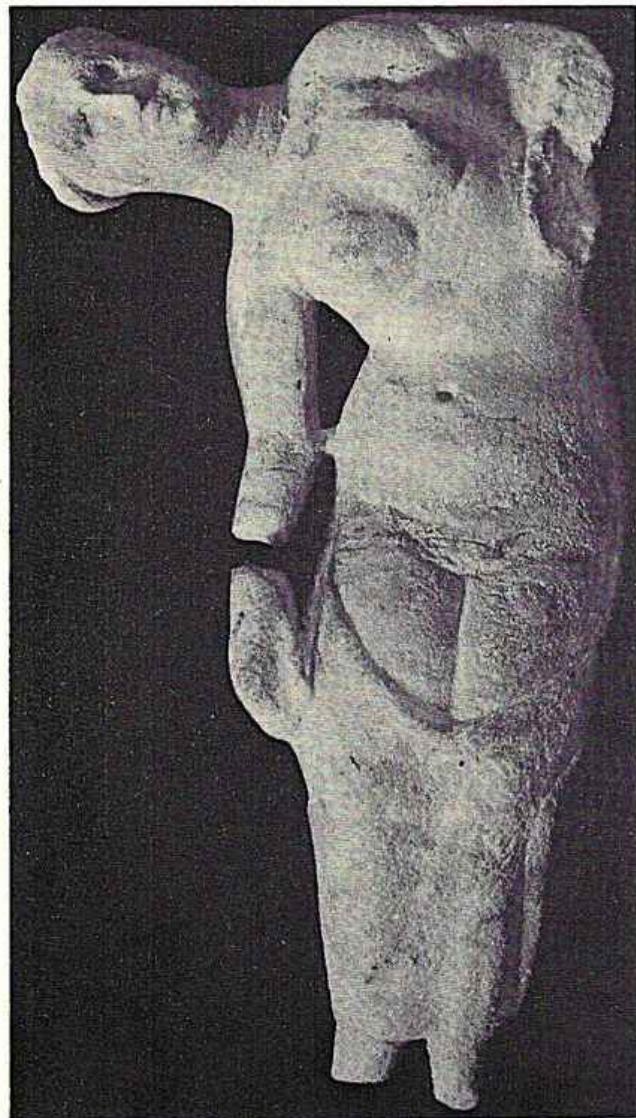
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83 Ctesiphon, Tāq-i Kisrā, after Dieulafoy.



(b)

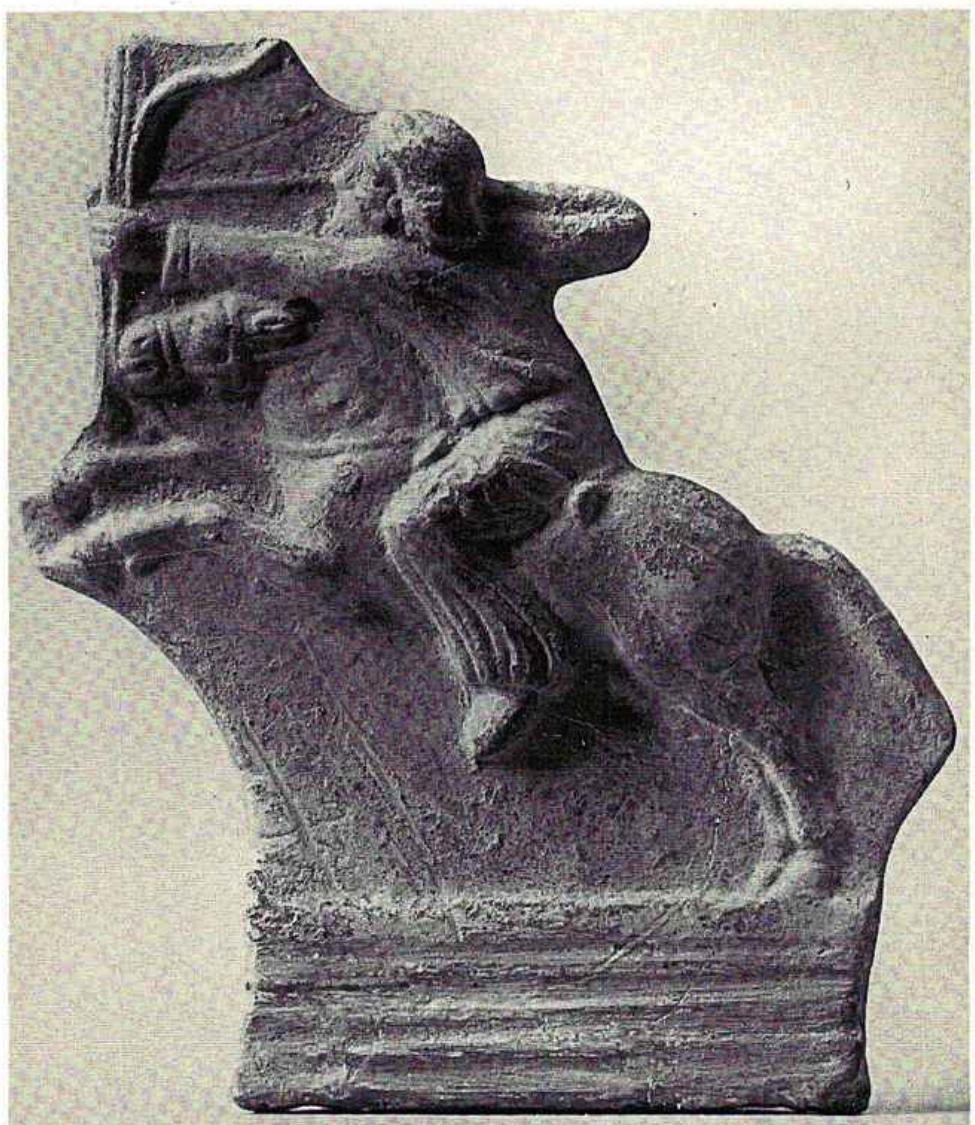


(a)

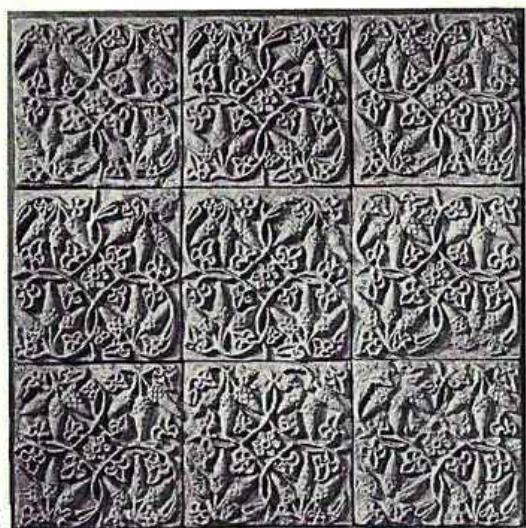


(c)

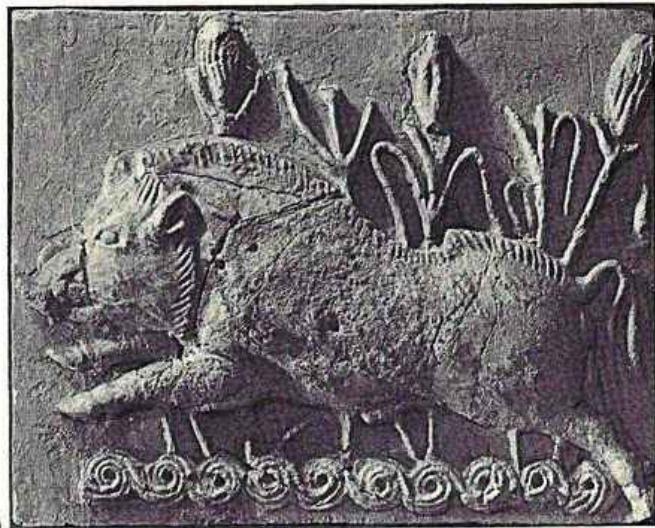
33 Hatra, (a) marble tomb-statuette, 2nd century A.D.
(b) Vault-stone with relief of a moon-goddess. Sandstone, 2nd century A.D.
(c) Part of a door-lintel from the so-called fire-temple. Sandstone, 2nd century A.D.



34 Archer on horseback, burned clay, Iraq or Syria, 1st-3rd centuries A.D.



(a)



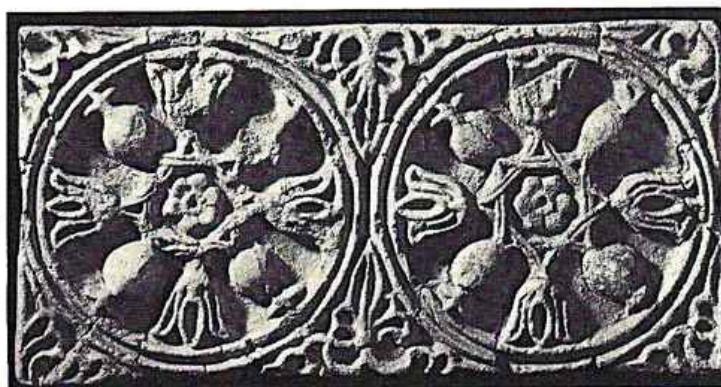
(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)

35 Ctesiphon, (a) plate of wall-plaster, 6th century A.D.

(b) plate of wall-plaster with bear, c. 6th century A.D.

(c) wall-plate, plaster, with jumping bear among rocks, 7th century A.D.

(d) wall-plate, plaster, with Pahlavi device, 6th century A.D.

(e) wall-plate, plaster, c. 600 A.D.